

The Christian's Duty, (8)

To know the

Principles and Reasons

O F

His Holy FAITH,

And to own and adhere to them
the Time of Persecution :

Represented in two

DISCOURSES,

Which conclude what was undertaken to be
spoke to from the Words of St. Peter.

1 PET. III. 13, 14, 15, 16.

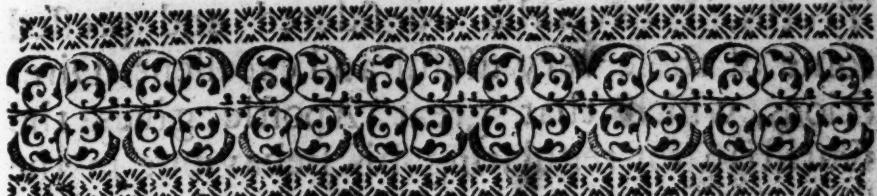
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and shall be vicissitudo etiamque in omniis
etiamque in omniis etiamque in omniis ; non ibi



DISCOURSE I.

i. Pet. iii. 15, 16.

— And be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you, with Meekness and Fear:

Having a good Conscience, that whereas they speak Evil of you, as of Evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ.

 In my former Discourses upon those Words of St. Peter, which more immediately precede these, which you have read : I have explained the Safety of the Righteous Man from Injury and Harm, and in Case he suffers for

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Righteousness sake, his Felicity in that Condition ; and together with these comfortable Truths, I have also considered and pressed some of those very useful and excellent Directions, which that great Apostle gives the Christian for regulating his Behaviour in the State of Persecution. And now it remains that, according to my Promise, I should from the Words which are presently before us, pursue the pious and charitable Design of St. Peter, and unfold and recommend the profitable Instructions which are contained in them.

And be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you with Meekness and Fear : Having a good Conscience, that whereas they speak Evil of you, as of Evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ.

That is, “ My christian Brethren, ye must take Care to be in a constant Forwardness and Disposition at all Times, to own and acknowledge your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to avouch and vindicate, even in the most dangerous Seations, the Truth of his holy Religion ; upon the faithful adhering whereunto ye expect that everlasting Happiness which it promiseth : Which that ye may do with the full Assurance of the Verity thereof in your own Minds, and the more effectual Conviction of Unbelievers ;

" lievers ; labour to be well instructed in the
 " Principles and Grounds of your Profession
 " and Faith, and when it is expedient, declare
 " and explain them with Calmness and Pa-
 " tience to all modest and proper Enquirers ;
 " with a pious Reverence of God, a just Re-
 " gard to Magistrates and Superiors, and a
 " holy Jealousy and Dread, lest by your Ig-
 " norance or ungoverned Passions, ye preju-
 " dice the excellent Cause which ye assert
 " and patronize : And finally, do ye sincere-
 " ly endeavour to be thoroughly Vertuous
 " and Holy, to conform your Hearts and
 " Lives to the Laws of Jesus Christ, that so,
 " however his and your malicious Enemies,
 " may misinterpret and malign your good
 " and Christian Deportment ; yet ye may be
 " conscious to your selves of your Uprightness
 " and Integrity, and they may be put to the
 " Blush, as being convinced by your conspi-
 " cuous Innocence of their own most injurious
 " Falshood and Calumny, while they re-
 " proach you as impious and wicked.

From these very important and comprehensive Injunctions of St. Peter, we learn,

*I. That it is the Duty of every Christian to
 endeavour to understand the Reasons and
 Grounds of the christian Faith, or why he pro-
 fesses himself to be a Disciple of Jesus Christ,
 and that proportionally he ought likewise dili-
 gently to enquire into those Arguments and Rea-*

sions, for which he is of such or such a Perswasion or Communion amongst Christians; and that he should study to satisfy himself of the Orthodoxy of the one, and the Lawfulness of the other. This is plainly included in that Advice; Be ye ready to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you. For how could the Christian apologize for his Religion, or explain the Motives thereof to others, if he was ignorant of them himself?

II. The Text informs us, That all they who believe the Truths and Precepts of the Gospel, are indispensably bound to confess the Truths and observe the Precepts thereof in the most discouraging Junctures; when Persecution threatens or attends the doing either of them. This Observation seems to be clearly gathered from the Circumstance of Time, which is annexed to that Injunction, Be ye always ready to give an Answer, &c. and it is also sufficiently warranted from the Nature of the Injunction it self, Be ye ready to give an Answer; whereby it is reasonably to be supposed, that St. Peter requires not only a Furniture and Store of Arguments in the Intellect of those to whom he writes, For secular Interest or worldly Fears might induce them to suppress that Knowledge;) but also a courageous and cheerful Forwardness in their Wills, on every just Occasion, openly to profess the Christian Religion.

III. The Words give us an Account of Those Qualifications, which must accompany and adorn the Christian in the Discharge of the above-named Duties. Which are first, Calmness and Patience of Spirit, whereby he may avoid exasperating the Adversaries of the Truth by Wrath and Passion while he vindicates the same. 2dly, A holy and religious Fear, lest by an indiscreet Zeal, or any other sinful Mis behaviour he should offend God or his lawful Governoours. 3dly, A good Conscience founded upon a blameless and Christian Behaviour, by which he may be able to silence or refute the calumnious Reproaches and Slanders of Heathens or other Infidels. Be ye always ready to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you, (the Qualifications follow) with Meekness and Fear: Having a good Conscience, that whereas they speak Evil of you as of Evil-doers, they may be ashamed which falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ.

Now before I press the Directions which are given in the Text, we are First to be put in Mind, that the Apostle does not oblige Every common and illiterate Person to refute the Sophisms and Cavils, or to answer all the Objections and intricate Questions of the Adversaries of the Truth. The Want of Education, and Opportunity of closer Study, together with the Weakness of Judgment and Capac-

ty, makes this impracticable to many, and *the convincing the Gain-sayer* seems to be a Task more especially assigned by St. Paul to the Ministers of Religion, Tit. i. Neither, tho St. Peter uses the most general Terms in his Injunction, both with Respect to Times and Persons, are we from thence to conclude universally that the Christian is required, *To declare his Sentiments, Faith and Religion to every private, scoffing or malicious Enquirer.* Our blessed Lord advises not to give that which is *holy unto Dogs, nor to cast Pearls before Swine.* And when he himself was interrogated by Herod on a bad Design, *He returned him no Answer; likewise when the high Priest asked him of his Disciples and of his Doctrine, he answered him thus; Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold they know what I said.* Jo. xviii. 19, 21.

The meaning of the Apostle in the mentioned Precept, is, that the Professors of the Gospel and its Truths should not be ignorant of the Grounds of their Religion, or Christians by pure Necessity or Chance, for which they can make no other Apology than their own Obstinacy and Stiffness, the good Luck of their Birth, the Fashion of their Country, and the Authority of their Teachers: But that they should act and demean themselves in this great Affair like Men endued with Reason and Discretion

cretion, and so by an impartial and diligent Research assure their own Minds of the Truth of their Religion, and then that they should never for the Love of any worldly Interest, or the Fear of temporal Danger, renounce and deny it, but rather boldly and readily confess and vindicate the same, when the Honour of God and the Edification of Men call them to it.

These Things being premised, I come in the first Place to consider from the Injunction, *Be ye always ready to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you:* " That it is the Duty of every Christian to use his most serious Endeavours, that he may understand the Reasons and Grounds of the Christian Faith; or why it is that he professes himself to be a Disciple of Jesus Christ, and that proportionally he ought likewise diligently to enquire into those Arguments and Reasons, for which he is of such or such a Persuasion or Communion among Christians, and that he should take Care to satisfy himself of the Orthodoxy of the one, and the Lawfulness of the other." This is plainly included in the Words which I have cited, for how should the Christian apologize for his Religion, or explain the Reasons thereof to others, of which he himself was ignorant?

Now however this Duty is shamefully and too

too generally neglected, I shall endeavour to let you see, that nevertheless it is the Christian's highest Concern and Interest to observe it.

I. The Scripture enjoyns the Exercise of our Reason and Judgement about Religion, it commands us carefully to search into the Truth thereof, and frequently warns us, that we may not rashly, and without just Reasons and Motives entertain those Doctrines which are proposed to our Belief.

II. The sincere and humble performing of this Duty, would contribute very much to render our Religion and the Acts thereof acceptable unto God; as being thereby more suitable both to his Nature and ours, more fit for us to offer, and for him to receive.

III. That which should very much excite the Christian's Endeavours, to understand the Principles and Reasons of his holy Religion, is that his being Ignorant of them would be a most shameful and ignominious Thing.

IV. As the mentioned Ignorance is highly shameful and ignominious, so it is also extremely dangerous to the Christian, because it exposes him to all the Attempts of the Enemies of the Truth, and makes him a cheap and easy Conquest to Persecutors and Impostors.

V. The Duty of Enquiring into the Grounds and Reasons of Religion, is particularly incumbent upon us Protestants, who disclaim

claim an infallible Judge of Controversies upon Earth, and reckon it to be our Christian Priviledge and Right, to receive no Articles of Faith upon the sole Credit of humane Authority, and that for our Assent unto these, we may call for proper and convincing Arguments from Revelation and Reason, according as the Nature of the Articles can bear it.

VI. And lastly, The woful Divisions of Christendom in the Matters of Religion, the high Pretensions of each Party to the Truth, and our being surrounded not only with Heretiy and Schism, but also with downright Infidelity and Atheism, do loudly call us to a most serious and impartial Enquiry into the Grounds and Principles of Faith, that so we our selves may be well instructed and confirmed therein, and be likewise ready to give an Answer to those who ask us a Reason of the Hope that is in us.

I. First, *The Scripture enjoyns the Exercise of our Reason and Judgement about Religion, it commands us carefully to search into the Truth thereof, and frequently warns us that we may not rashly and without just Reasons and Motives, entertain those Doctrines which are proposed to our Belief.* Thus the great Doctor of the Gentiles writing to the Christian Corinthians, exhorts them after this Manner, *Brethren, be not Children in Understanding, howbeit in Malice be ye Children, but in Understanding be Men.*

Men. 1 Cor. xiv. 20. And he also in his Epistle to the *Colossians*, advises them to the same Purpose, *Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all Wisdom*, i. 16. Again the same Apostle is highly displeased with his Countrymen, because of their slow Proficiency in the Knowledge of Jesus Christ, which he signifies in these Words, *Of whom we have many Things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of Hearing. For when for the Time ye ought to be Teachers, ye have need that one teach you again; which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God.* Heb. vi. 11, 12.

The glorious and infallible Apostle and high Priest of our Profession Christ Jesus, tho he might have most justly pleaded an *αὐτὸν*, his own simple Authority for his Doctrines, yet he was pleased very often to subject his Sayings to the severest Examination and Trial, and he offered the highest Evidence could reasonably be desired, for what he recommended to the Belief or Practice of Men. Well knowing that however Ignorance might afterwards be applauded as the Mother of Devotion, by those who designed to raise their own Grandeur and Authority upon it; that truly it was the Fountain and Nurse of Superstition, Errour, Heresy and every evil Work. Accordingly we find our Lord and Master in that famous Discourse which he had with the Jews at Jerusalem, appealing to a great Variety

riety of the most convincing and incontestable Arguments for proving his Mission from God, and that he was the *Messiah*, as we fully learn from the 31 to the 40 Verse of the v. Chapter of the **Gospel according to St. John.** There we see how he argues from the Witness of St. *John* the Baptist, from the greater Witness of his own Miracles, from the glorious Testimony which his Father gave him from Heaven, and from the consentient Testimony of the holy Scriptures, which they themselves esteemed to be of Divine Authority, which Scriptures he desires them to search. Thus the Apostle St. *Paul* discoursing to the *Corinthians* of several important Matters relating both to Faith and Practice; he allows them the Judgement of Discretion about them, *I speak as to wise Men, judge ye what I say.* 1 Cor. x. 15.

Suitably to what I am advancing, the sacred Historian of the Acts of the Apostles, narrates it, to the eternal Renown of the generous and circumspect Jews at *Berea*; that as they did joyfully hear and entertain the Doctrine of Jesus Christ declared unto them by *Paul* and *Silas*; so also that they acted therein like wise and considerate Men, for that they might not be imposed upon by too easy a Credulity, and that they might be rationally confirmed and built up in the Faith, they diligently enquired into the Books of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, concerning the Truth of what had been affirmed

firmed and preached unto them in their Synagogue. *Act's xvii. 11.* These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all Readiness of Mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those Things were so.

For the farther clearing of the present Argument, we may observe that Jesus Christ doth again and again, with great Solemnity, exhort his Disciples to *beware of false Prophets and of the Leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees*, and his Apostles do speak of false Prophets and pernicious Hereticks in their own time, and they also foretel of lewd and wicked Men who would introduce and propagate erroneous and damnable Opinions, contrary to the true Faith, and destructive to the Salvation of Souls. Now, as all this necessarily supposes the Exercise of the Christian's Reason and Understanding about Religion, and a Right and Power to examine those Doctrines which are proposed to his Belief ; and as he is bound out of regard to Truth and his own Salvation so to do: So it is positively and plainly recommended to him thus to behave himself in that great Affair. When St. Paul forbids the *Thessalonians to despise Prophesying*, he presently subjoins that memorable Injunction, by which he exhorts them to examine their agreeableness to the Analogy of Faith, '*Despise not Prophesying*,

sayings. Prove all things : hold fast that which is good. 1 Thes. v. 20, 21. And St. John being aware of the many dreadful Inconveniences, which might attend the hasty and indeliberate Entertainment of Doctrines and Opinions, even tho asserted and offered by some who make high Pretensions to Inspiration : He gives the following important and remarkable Advice to Christians, Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they be of God : because many false Prophets are gone out into the World. 1 Joh. iv. 1.

II. Secondly, That which exceedingly recommends to the Christian the Duty of using his utmost Endeavours, that he may understand the Grounds and Reasons of his Religion, is this Consideration ; The sincere and humble Performing thereof would contribute very much to render his Religion and the Acts thereof acceptable unto God, as being thereby more suitable both to his Nature and ours ; more fit for us to offer and him to receive.

Our wise and gracious Creator hath endued our Souls with the glorious Faculties of Understanding and Will, with a Design that we should employ both these Powers in his Worship and Service, and that our Religion and Faith should proceed from our own free and deliberate Choice ; and accordingly he requires of us a rational and willing Homage
and

and Obedience, as a just requital of such distinguishing Favours, and as that which well becomes free and reasonable Beings to pay to him the Being of eternal and perfect Reason and Liberty.

Thus he commands us to love and serve him with all the *Heart, Soul and Mind, or Understanding*, as the Scribe expounds that Word in the Gospel according to St. *Mark* xii. 33. The *Israelites* were expressly forbidden to sacrifice unto the Lord the Beast that had any Blemish, and particularly that of Blindness, *Deut. xv. 21.* from which the Conclusion seems to be very natural, that a blind and ignorant Devotion is unworthy of the supreme Majesty of Heaven and Earth. Our Saviour upbraided the *Samaritans* that *they worshipped they knew not what*, and adds, *God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth*: That is, our Worship must be spiritual and genuine, such as corresponds to the Divine Nature, and consists chiefly in the Mind sanctified by his Grace, and enlightened by his Truth, *John iv. 22. 24.* St. *Paul* being in the *Areopagus*, charges the *Athenians* as guilty of a most scandalous Indecency in their Devotions; of a Practice extreamly unbecoming them who pretended so highly to Reason and Philosophy; viz. That they set up an Altar to an *unknown God*, and worshipped him ignorantly, *Acts xvii. 23.* And he writing

to the Romans converted from Darkness unto Light, from heathenish Idolatry and Ignorance, to the Knowledge and Worship of the true and living God, he exhorts them with a most zealous Concern to serve and worship him in a way suitable both to his Nature and theirs ; *I beseech you therefore Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable Service.* Rom. 12. 1.

III. Thirdly, It ought to excite the Christian very much to enquire into, and understand the Principles and Reasons of his holy Religion ; because his being ignorant of them would be a most shameful and ignominious Thing. How extreamly absurd and reproachful is it, that Men, whom God hath adorned with Discretion and Judgment, for the Direction and Management of their Actions and Affairs, should be stupid, Children, or very Brutes in their Religion ? That they should take up their Faith by Fate or at a venture, or like sheep sillily proceed where they see others go, without considering the Safety or Danger of the Way ? We commonly have no great Opinion of the Person, who in his worldly Business blindly and absolutely gives himself up to the Conduct and Government of another : But how exceedingly more contemptible and mean is he, who in the most important Affair of Religion becomes the Property of one
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who is fallible as well as himself ; who shuts his own Eyes and Renounces his own Reason and Understanding, and wholly impowers another to see, to judge and chuse for him. Tho indeed it be highly dutiful and becoming for private Christians, to honour and esteem the Decisions of general or national Councils and Synods in the Matters of Religion; and to pay a just regard to the Sentiments and Judgment of wise, pious and experienced Pastours: Yet it would be most disgraceful for them to throw off all care of enquiring into the Truth of their Religion themselves, and to devolve that weighty Province and Trust upon another ; simply to pin their Faith to the Sleeve of their Teachers, to swallow down unchewed their Dictates and Opinions, and to lay the Stress of their eternal happiness upon a Perswasion or Doctrine, which, for what they have enquired or know, may be erroneous and damnable; and so may prove instead of a sure Foundation for their blessed Hope, an *Egyptian Reed* to pierce them through to their utter Ruin and Misery.

IV. *Fourthly*, As it is highly shameful and ignominious in Christians to be supinely negligent of enquiring into, and ignorant of the Grounds and Reasons of their Faith, so it is extremely dangerous to them ; because it exposes them to all the Attempts of the Enemies of the Truth, and makes them a cheap and easy Conquest.

quest to Persecuters and Impostors. For while they are unacquainted with the Nature of their holy Religion, and can give no Proof and Argument for it, but the Fashion of their Country, the Tradition of their Fathers, or the Authority of their Teachers, can it reasonably be expected, that they should resist the Address and Sophistry of cunning Men that ly in wait to deceive ? Or that they should endure the fiery Trial of Persecution for the constant Profession thereof ? Is it not rather to be fear'd that such lazy and ignorant Professors will turn about with every Wind of Doctrine, and embrace the Religion that is most fashionable and advantageous ? and that they will not be at the Trouble and Expence to contend or suffer for an Opinion or Practice, a Perswasion or Communion, of the Truth or Lawfulness whereof they are so far from being assured from Scripture and Reason, that they have never been at the Pains to enquire into the one or other ? To this Purpose St. Paul speaking of the Authors of Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine of Christ, Observes concerning them, that they made their greatest Harvest amongst ignorant and unwary People, *By good Words and fair Speeches they deceive the Hearts of the Simple,* Rom. xvi. 17, 18. He again writing to Timothy of some vile and impious Hereticks, tells him, that *they led captive silly Women, laden with*

with diverse Lusts ; ever learning, and never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth. 2 Tim. iii. 6, 7. These Observations of St. Paul are homologated by St. Peter, who describing the accursed and abominable Sect of the Gnosticks, and the Persons whom they proselyted, saith, *They beguiled unstable Souls, poor simple new converted Christians, who were not thoroughly instructed and established in the Knowledge of their Religion,* 2 Pet. ii. 14. To this agrees the saying of our Lord in the Parable of the Sower, Matth. xiii. 19. *When any one heareth the Word of the Kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his Heart.* And alas ! in all Ages and Times the woful and frequent Unconstancy of Men in adhering unto the Truth, is much to be imputed to their voluntary and affected Ignorance of it. This is the shameful Reason why many change Sides and Opinions, both with respect to Church and State ; why they transfer their Allegiance, and turn over to Heresy and Errour, to schismatical Communions, and even to Infidelity and Atheism.

Now they who seriously reflect how necessary sound and orthodox Principles, and a Practice agreeable unto these, are in order to eternal Happiness ; and how fatal to it on the other Hand is Apostacy from the Faith and Holiness, how dangerous Heresy, Schism, and

and every wicked Practice are to Men's Salvation : They, I say, who believe and consider these things, will presently see how much it is their Interest to be established in the sound, true and pure Christian Faith and Practice by the distinct Knowledge of the Principles, Grounds and Rules of both ; that so they may be constant and unmoveable in the Profession of the Truth and Performance of their Duty, and may the more effectually and boldly resist the Craft, Threats, Allurements and Arguments of such as would perswade or frighten them to make Shipwrack of the Faith and a good Conscience.

V. Fifthly, *The Duty of enquiring into the Grounds and Reasons of Religion, is particularly incumbent upon us Protestants, who disclaim an infallible Judge of Controversies upon Earth, and reckon it to be our Christian Privilege and Right to receive no Articles of Faith upon the sole Credit of humane Authority ; and that for giving our Assent unto these, we may call for proper and convincing Arguments from Revelation and Reason, according as the Nature of the Articles can bear it.* The Protestant Churches do universally declare and affirm the Fallibility of Councils and Synods, however general, and of particular Bishops and Pastors of whatsoever Character or Dignity, since the Days of the Apostles. And they reject and condemn all the Pretensions of the Church of Rome to

Infallibility : And they pity and disprove the easy and credulous Simplicity of the People of that Communion, who without Examination and Tryal, believe as their Church believes, and abandon themselves entirely to the Dictates and Conduct of their Priests and Clergy. Now if we would walk agreeably to this our avowed and orthodox Principle, we ought impartially and seriously to examine the Grounds and Reasons of our holy Religion, and to satisfie our selves so far as we can of the Truth thereof. And we ought to suffer no Man, nor Company of Men, to lord it over our Faith and Conscience, nor believe any thing as necessary in order to Salvation, upon the naked and unwarranted Testimony of the most renown'd and learned Doctors. If we behave our selves otherwise, and lazily neglect to search into and know the Truth of our Perswasion and Communion ; and if indeliberately and upon Trust we embrace those Doctrines and that Communion, upon the Faith and Observance whereof we look for eternal Happiness ; then we fall into that unmanly and unwise Practice, with which we so justly charge and reproach the Papists.

VI. Sixthly and lastly, *The lamentable Divisions of Christendom in the Matters of Religion, the high Pretensions of each Party to the Truth, and our being surrounded not only with*

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Heresy and Schism, but also with downright Infidelity and Atheism, do loudly call us to a most serious and impartial Inquiry into the Grounds and Principles of Faith. That so we our selves may be well instructed and confirmed therein, and be likewise ready to give an Answer to those who ask us a Reason of the Hope that is in us.

The missionary Priests of Rome travel over Sea and Land to make Proselytes, and they labour with a Zeal nothing short of that of the Pharisees to disseminate their own pernicious Errors, and to withdraw us from the Simplicity of the Truth as it is in Jesus Christ. And ah! the Sects of these who call themselves Protestants are scandalously numerous, some of which do maintain the most impious Heresies, and others are plainly guilty of the most groundless Separation from those Christian Societies, with which they are bound to keep Communion. And above all it is deplorable that many of these who had the Honour to be baptized in the Name of Jesus, and brought up in the Knowledge of his holy Religion, have yet profanely renounced our Lord and Saviour, apostatized from the Christian Faith, and have arrived at the Impudence of vindicating their most horrid and unreasonable Apostacy. While thus we are on all Hands encompassed with a hideous Variety of dangerous and damnable Opinions, Tenets and Practices in Matters of Religion, it well becomes

comes us to steer an even and steady Course, that so we may neither break upon the Rocks of Schism, nor be swallowed up of the Gulfs of Heresy or Infidelity. And that we may happily escape these dreadful Dangers, and may not as St. Paul speaks, *be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the Sleight of Men and cunning Craftiness, whereby they ly in wait to deceive*: Let us secure our Adherance to those Christian Truths which we presently believe and profess, and our constant Affection and Respect to the Church's Peace and Unity, to true catholick Communion, by a candid, diligent and religious Research into the Reasonableness of both.

Thus I have endeavoured to let you see from these Words of the Text, *Be ye always ready to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you,*
 " That it is the Duty of every Christian to
 " use his most serious Endeavours, that he may
 " understand the Reasons and Grounds of the
 " Christian Faith: And that proportionably
 " he ought likewise diligently to enquire into
 " those Arguments and Reasons, for which he
 " is of such or such a Perswasion or Commu-
 " nion amongst Christians; and that he should
 " take care to satisfie himself of the Ortho-
 " doxy of the one, and lawfulness of the other.
 But alas! How justly reprovable are the ge-
 nera-

nerality of Christians, for their most unaccountable Neglect of this great and important Duty? Who owe their Religion wholly to the Font, to the Place of their Birth, the Profession of Instruction in their tender Years, the Example of Parents, Superiors and Neighbours, the Laws of the Land, and the Mode of the Age they live in? So that truly many who are called Christians, can give no Reason of the Hope that is in them, no other Account of their being Christians, and not Jews, Mahometans or Heathens, than the Happiness of their Nativity and Education, in their being born and living in a Christian Country. And to descend no farther into this melancholy Observation, there are too many who profess the true reformed Protestant Religion, as it stands in opposition both to Popery and Schism; who can produce no solid Arguments for it, and who are rather happy than wise in the Doctrines which they own, and the Communion which they observe. O! the reproachful and dangerous State of such Persons, who in the noble and momentous Affair of Religion, behave themselves like Creatures void of Reason and Discretion, who ly open to the Assaults of Deceivers and Persecuters, to the Designs of all those whose Business it is, either by Fraud or Force to pervert them from Truth and Righteousness, and who alas! like a Ship without Pilot and Ballast, are lyable to be driven hither

hither and thither with the impetuous Tides
and Blasts of false Doctrines and Adversity,
until at length they lose both their Faith and
their Souls. Let the firm Belief of the Sin-
fulness, the Disgrace, and the Folly of such a
Practice, persuade us to avoid it with the ut-
most Care, and to obey the Injunction of St.
Peter, while he says, *Be ye always ready to
give an Answer to every Man that asketh you
a Reason of the Hope that is in you.*

What now remains to be added on this ex-
cellent Subject, is, That I should represent the
most effectual Methods for attaining the
Knowledge of the Grounds and Reasons of
our holy Religion, and an Ability to vindi-
cate and explain them unto others as we shall
have Occasion.

I. And here first, we must in all Humility
by frequent and importunate Prayer, apply
our selves unto God the Father of Lights, the
Great Author of Wisdom and Knowledge,
that, as St. Paul requests in Behalf of the E-
phesians, he may give unto us *The Spirit of
Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of him.*
The Eyes of our Understanding being enlighten'd,
*that we may know what is the Hope of his Cal-
ling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his
Inheritance in the Saints.* Ephes. i. 17, 18.
This Advice is often given to us in the Scrip-
ture, and the Observance thereof recommend-
ed by the Practice of the Saints. As to the first

St.

St. James says, If any of you lack Wisdom let him ask of God, i. 5. And as to the other we we find David putting up these Petitions unto God. *Show me thy Ways O Lord, teach me thy Paths. Lead me in thy Truth, and teach me, for thou art the God of my Salvation, on thee do I wait all the Day. Teach me thy Way O Lord, I will walk in thy Truth. Open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold wondrous Things out of thy Law. Give me Understanding and I shall keep thy Law.* Ps. xxv, lxxxvi, cxix. Agreeably to this the Apostle prays, that the Colossians might be filled with the Knowledge of his Will, in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding. i. 9. 'Tis the Lord who giveth Wisdom, out of his Mouth cometh Knowledge and Understanding ; and it is in his Light that we shall see Light. It is he who discovers Divine Mysteries and Truths to pious humble Enquirers, who sets them in the clearest Light before the Eye of their Minds, convinces them fully of their Verity, and enables them to explain them distinctly unto others. And without the Conduct and Illumination of the Holy Spirit, the most acute and learned Doctors will find the Defects of their own most accurate Researches and Enquiries into divine and spiritual Things.

II. Secondly, In order to the acquiring the Knowledge of the Grounds and Principles of our holy Religion, and the explaining and vindicating

vindicating them to others ; it will be of great Use to us that we be well acquainted with the *Scriptures*, that we make these sacred Writings our continual and serious Study, and that we earnestly beseech their Divine Author to open our Understandings that we may know the Meaning of the same. These holy Books are a complete System of whatever is necessary for us to believe or do in order to Salvation ; and as they contain fully and distinctly the Articles of Faith and Precepts of Life ; so they assert and explain their own divine Authority, and furnish us with just and sufficient Arguments for what they recommend either to our Belief or Practice. To this Purpose St. Paul speaking of the *Holy Scriptures* to Timothy, he commends them as *able to make him wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus.* And continuing his Encomium of them, he says, *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness ; that the Man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good Works.*

2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17. The *Psalmist* gives clear and frequent Testimony to the Usefulness of the *Scriptures*, for enlightening devout and serious Students in them with the most excellent Knowledge and Wisdom. *The Testimony of the Lord makes Wise the Simple, and his Commandment enlightens the Eyes.* *xix.* I have

have more Understanding than all my Teachers,
for thy Testimonies are my Meditation. Thy
Word is a Lamp unto my Feet and a Light unto
my Path. The Entrance of thy Words giveth
Light, it giveth Understanding to the Simple.

cxix.

III. Thirdly, If we would be thoroughly
endued with true Wisdom and Theology, with
the saving and satisfying Knowledge of the
Grounds and Principles of Faith, of Divine
Truths and Mysteries; let us exercise our
selves unto Godliness, or the sincere and uni-
form Practice of Righteousness and Piety. The
Efficacy and Profitableness of this Method for
the Purpose I have named, is very plainly af-
ferted in the Scriptures both of the old and
new Testaments. Ps. xxv. 12, 14. *What Man*
is he that feareth the Lord, him shall he teach in
the Way that he shall choose. The Secret of the
Lord is with them that fear him, and he will
shew them his Covenant. What the Psalmist
thus speaks in general with Respect to the
Righteous, he attests from his own Experience,
cxix, 100. *I understand more than the Ancients,*
because I keep thy Precepts. And the wise
Son of this pious King, confirms this his Fa-
ther's Observation, by saying, *The Lord layeth*
up sound Wisdom for the Righteous. Prov. ii. 7.
And again, *The Froward is Abomination to*
the Lord: But his Secret is with the Righteous.
Prov. iii. 32. To this Purpose Jesus speaking to
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the Jews in the Temple, saith, *My Doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.* If any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self. Jo. vii. 16, 17. And again, *He that hath my Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest my self unto him.* xiv. 21. Which comfortable Truth our blessed Lord both confirms and explains Verse 23, by asserting the familiar and ineffable Presence of the Father and himself in the Hearts of his loving and obedient Friends. *If a Man love me he will keep my Words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our Abode with him.* And indeed it is reasonable to think, that they who are so near to the Sun of Righteousness will be enlighten'd by him; that they who are renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and continue obedient to his Motions, will be guided by him into all Truth absolutely necessary to their eternal Happiness.

IV. Fourthly, A devout and conscientious Attending upon *Religious Assemblies* will be very profitable to the Christian in this Affair. The Receiving with Faith, Meekness and Humility, those Instructions which are there given to him; either immediately from the Scriptures, or from Discourses formed from,

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and agreeably unto them by the Ministers and Ambassadors of Christ ; will contribute very much to increase his Knowledge in divine Things, and to build him up in his most holy Faith. The Presence of God is in a peculiar Manner promised to his People in the Christian Assemblies, and his Blessing to the Ministration of his Servants in them. The Word of God, and the Gospel of Christ there read and preached by those whom he hath called to the holy Office of Teaching his People, hath a singular Efficacy for sanctifying their Hearts and enlightening their Understandings. That Promise which he made to the Apostles of his gracious and special Presence, while they preached the Gospel and taught all Nations ; doth undoubtedly belong in some Measure to their Successors in the sacred Ministry to the End of the World. What I have asserted in this Matter is explain'd and proved beyond all reasonable Contradiction, by the following memorable Words of St. Paul, *He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastours and Teachers ; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the Edifying of the Body of Christ : Till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ ; that we henceforth be no more Children tossed to and fro*

fro and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the Sleight of Men and cunning Craftiness, whereby they ly in Wait to deceive. But speaking the Truth in Love, may grow up into him in all Things, which is the Head, even Christ. Ephes. iv. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

V. Fifthly and lastly, It will be exceedingly useful to such who desire to be farther instructed and confirmed in the true Christian Faith, in the Grounds and Principles of their holy and excellent Religion; as it stands in Opposition to those impious Opinions, destructive Errours and evil Practices, to the Danger whereof they are most exposed, viz. Infidelity and Atheism, Popery, Schism and Rebellion: That they carefully read those Books which are written to noble Purpose upon the mentioned Subjects, which clear and assert the Truth of Christianity against Atheists and Infidels, which explain and vindicate pure Christian Religion against the Patrons of the Errours of the Church of *Rome*, which shew the Necessity of keeping true Catholick Communion, in Contradiction to Schism and groundless Separation, and which settle Loyalty and Obedience to lawful Governours and Powers, upon solid Christian Principles and Reasons.

I should now proceed to consider the other Observations which I took Notice of from the Text; but they will more conveniently

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be the Subject of the following Discourse: And therefore I shall conclude this, only adding the Collect for St. Mark's Day.

O Almighty God who hast instructed thy holy Church with the heavenly Doctrine of thy Evangelist Saint Mark; Give us Grace that being not like Children carried away with every Blast [of vain Doctrine, we may be established in the Truth of thy holy Gospel, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



DISCOURSE II.

i. Pet. iii. 15, 16.

—And be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you, with Meekness and Fear: Having a good Conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil Doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ.

THE second Observation of which, in the foregoing Discourse, I took notice from the Words of the Text, was this. The Disciples of Jesus Christ are indispensably bound constantly to adhere to the Truths and Precepts of the Gospel, and, when called therunto, to confess the Truths and observe the Precepts thereof, in the most discouraging Junctures, when Persecution threatens or attends the doing either of them. This Observation seems to be

be clearly inferred from the Circumstance of Time, which is annexed to that Injunction, *Be ye ALWAYS ready to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you.* And it is also sufficiently warranted from the Nature of the Injunction it self, *Be ye ready to give an Answer.* Whereby it is reasonably to be supposed, that St. Peter requires not only a Furniture and Store of Arguments in the Intellect of those to whom he writes ; (for secular Interest or worldly Fears might induce them to suppress that Knowledge,) but also a courageous and chearful Forwardness in their Wills, on every just Occasion, openly to profess the Christian Religion.

I must acknowledge, that the Duty which I now design to recommend, hath from the first Publication of the Gospel until this Hour, met with a most vehement Opposition from the Lusts and Prejudices of Men. In the Time of the publick Appearance and Ministry of Jesus Christ, many by the stupendous Miracles he wrought, the powerful Sermons he preached, and the innocent Life which he led, were perswaded in their Minds to give Faith and Credit to him as the great Prophet and Messiah : But lest they should incur the Reproach of Men, and the Censures and Prosecution of the *Sanhedrin*, they did not openly own his Mission, nor profess them-

selves to be his Disciples. *John xii. 42, 43.* Nevertheless among the chief Rulers also, many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue. For they loved the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God. The Gnosticks and some other Hereticks maintained it to be lawful, in the time of Persecution, to renounce the outward Profession of Christianity, and to symbolize with Jews or Heathens: And, to cover so foul and pernicious an Errour, they asserted, that the inward Faith and Piety of the Soul was accepted of by God, when the open Acknowledgment and Confession of the Faith was dangerous and hurtful. Alas! the scandalous Behaviour of many gives too just Reason to suspect that they are of this Opinion; and it is much to be feared that the most of Men would gladly have it to be true, it being the greatest Contradiction to their corrupt unsanctified Nature, which absolutely governs them, to renounce the good Things of this present Life for the Hope of better Things in that Life which is to come. But however grievous the Duty of constant Adherence to the Truths and Precepts of Jesus Christ, in the time of Persecution, may be to unregenerate and carnal Professors; and whatever Fallacies they may form unto themselves to excuse them from the Practice of it: Yet I shall endeavour to

evidence the Obligation and Necessity which lies upon all Christians unto the Observance thereof.

And here, *First*, let us consider, that our blessed Lord and Master hath in the plainest & most peremptory Terms, and with the most awful and weighty Sanctions, obliged all his Followers constantly to adhere to his Doctrines and Precepts ; and, when they are called thereunto, to confess the one, and obey the other, in the most discouraging Junctures, when Persecution threatens or attends the doing either of them.

Secondly, The Christian is bound to the performing of this Duty by the Laws of the highest Equity and Justice ; and the doing otherwise would involve him in the Guilt of the most criminal Iniquity and Unrighteousness to his Sovereign Lord.

Thirdly, The wilful and deliberate renouncing of the Christian Faith, or any of the Articles and Precepts thereof, with a Design to avoid Persecution by that Apostasy, is at once an Instance of the most horrid Impiety, of the vilest Falseness and Dishonesty, and of the most shameful Timidity and Cowardice.

Fourthly, What in the most dangerous Seasons, ought to prevail with the Christian to be stedfast and firm in professing the Truths and obeying the Precepts of his holy Religion ; is, that this his Constancy and Persever-

rance would tend very much to the Glory of God, the Interest of Religion, and the Advantage both of the Friends and Enemies of Truth and Righteousness.

Fifthly and lastly, The Disciples of Jesus Christ, are both exceedingly encouraged and obliged to a noble and bold Adherence to the Truth and their Duty, in the Time of Persecution ; by his glorious Example, and that of the Confessors and Martyrs under the old and new Testament.

I. *First*, Let us consider that our blessed Lord and Master hath in the plainest and most peremptory Terms, and with the most awful and weighty Sanctions, obliged all his Followers constantly to adhere to his Doctrines and Precepts ; and when they are called thereunto, to confess the one and obey the other, in the most discouraging Junctures ; when Persecution threatens or attends the doing either of them. Jesus on several very solemn Occasions hath declared it to be his positive Pleasure and Will, that all his Disciples, without Exception, should take up the Cross, and submit themselves to a State of suffering for Righteousnes sake ; whensoever the Providence of God calls them to it, and they cannot evite it without Sin. He tells us that they are a Reproach to him, absolutely unworthy of the Name of his Disciples, and downright incapable of being such, who are more attached

tached in their Affection to their dearest Relatives and worldly Concerns than unto him ; and who are not ready for his Cause to abandon their most valuable temporal Interests and Advantages, and to endure the most grievous Losses and Pains. And that all who profess to believe in his Name might know how serious he is in recommending to them the bearing of the Cross for Truth and Holiness sake ; and how much it is their Interest to persevere in the Profession of the Faith, and Practice of their Duty ; notwithstanding the direst Persecution which might threaten them on that Account : He tells them that their Salvation depends upon their Constancy, and that everlasting Ruin and Destruction will be the Effect of their Backsliding, if not repented of. He shews them, that however by their Apostasy they may preserve their short temporal Life ; nevertheless by this their Detestable Villany they shall undoubtedly forfeit the Life which is eternal : And that, tho by forsaking him and his Doctrines, they may basely secure or purchase unto themselves the greatest worldly Advantages ; yet they shall miserably lose their precious and immortal Souls, and miss those endless and inexpressible Joys which he hath purchased for all his sincere and constant Followers.

The Truth of these Things will appear with the clearest Evidence to him who considers

ders the following Texts. Mat. x. 37, 38, 39.
*He that loveth Father or Mother more than me,
is not worthy of me; and he that loveth Son or
Daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.*
*And he that taketh not his Cross, and follow-
eth after me, is not worthy of me. He that fin-
deth his Life shall lose it: and he that loseth his
Life for my sake shall find it.* Mat. xvi. 24,
25, 26. After that Jesus had sharply rebuked Peter, for advising him to decline his approaching Sufferings, then he directs his Discourse to all his Disciples in these remarkable Words; *Then said Jesus unto his Disciples, if any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me, For whosoever will save his Life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his Life for my sake shall find it. For what is a Man profited if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?* I shall quote no more Texts to the Purpose in hand, but that in St. Luke, xiv. 25, 26,
27. *And there went great Multitudes with him: and he turned and said unto them, If any Man come to me, and hate not his Father and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Sisters, yea and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his Cross, and come after me, cannot be my Disciple.*

And lest any should foolishly expect, that
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the retaining in the Time of Persecution an inward Respect to Jesus Christ and his Doctrines, would apologize for the outward renouncing of him or them, or that the Faith of the Heart might excuse the Perjury of the Lip : We are again and again most plainly informed, that there lies upon us a Necessity in the Hour of Tryal, of openly confessing and owning our Blessed Lord, and the Truths and Precepts of his Gospel ; and that we shall be plunged into the deepest Guilt and Danger if we deny him or them. The Expressions to this Purpose in the Scripture, are such as may strike Horrour into the Minds of those who have either actually renounced any known Truth or Duty, or are resolved so to do ; and they ought by the reading of them to be excited to a present and most serious Repentance. How justly I have affirmed this, I appeal to the Passages themselves. Mat. x. 32, 33. *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before Men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before Men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.* Mark viii. 38. *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my Words in this adulterous and sinful Generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, and with the holy Angels.* St. Paul was well apprised of this great Truth, as he

often testifies in his Writings by very full and luculent Expressions. Rom. x. 9, 10. If thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine Heart that God hath raised him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation. Again, 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12. He ushers in what he says upon this Head, with a very solemn and emphatick Preface : It is a faithful Saying : For if we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him : If we suffer, we shall also reign with him : If we deny him, he also will deny us.

II. Secondly, The Christian is bound to the performing of this Duty, by the Laws of the highest Equity and Justice ; and the doing otherwise would involve him in the Guilt of the most criminal Iniquity and Unrighteousness to his Sovereign Lord. The Reason of this Assertion is clear, because we, as to the whole Man, our Bodies as well as Souls, are Christ's by the strong and undeniable Titles of Creation and Redemption ; and are therefore unquestionably bound to pay him the entire Obedience and Homage of our whole Persons, to serve him with all that is his own, and so to honour him in the Days of Persecution with the Confession of the Mouth, as well as with the hidden Belief of the Heart. So that truly for us to deny Christ our right-

ful and glorious Lord, our external Service and Acknowledgement on that Occasion, was sacrilegiously to rob him of his undoubted Right, and to refuse to honour him in a Way and Manner, which such Circumstances extremely required. We may here very justly apply the Reasoning of St. Paul in another Case. *1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.* *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a Price; therefore glorify God in your Body, and your Spirit, which are God's.*

III. *Thirdly,* The wilful and deliberate Renouncing of the Christian Faith, or any of the Articles and Precepts thereof, with a Design to avoid Persecution by that Apostasy, or to retain or acquire the Advantages of this World, is at once an Instance of the most horrid Impiety, of the vilest Falseness and Dishonesty, and of the most abject Timidity and Cowardice. This Apostasy supposes a most irreligious Prophaneness of Spirit, an astonishing Neglect and Disregard of God, the lowest Esteem of Truth, and a most scornful Contempt of the precious Promises, and the tremendous Threatnings of the Gospel. The Apostate plainly declares that he fears weak Man more than the Almighty God, that he loves the Creature more than the Creator, that he prefers the transient Things of Time to the infinite Joys of Eternity, and that he chooses rather to be without God and his Favour for ever,

ver, than to be without the Pleasures, Preferments and Profits of this World for a Moment. St. Paul reflecting how abominable this renders the Apostate unto God, says, *The Just shall live by Faith, but if any Man draw back, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him.* Heb. x. 38. As the Back-sider is guilty of the greatest Impiety, so also of the vilest Falseness and Dishonesty. Men commonly appear confounded and amazed, when they hear of some Instances of disingenous and perfidious Treachery; as is the villainous forsaking of a loving and faithful Friend, the Transferring of Allegiance from a lawful and good Prince to a cruel Tyrant and Usurper, the Running away of Souldiers from their Colours unto the Camp of the Enemy, and the betraying of an important Trust. Now the wilful and flagitious Apostate is guilty of all this after the most detestable Manner and Degree. For he leaves his infinitely kind and gracious Saviour; he exchanges Jesus Christ his most righteous and merciful Lord for the Devil; he shamefully abandons the Ensigns of the Captain of his Salvation, and deserts unto him who incessantly seeks his Damnation and Ruin; and instead of contending for the Faith once delivered unto him, and discharging himself honestly of that momentous and sacred Trust; he most treacherously violates his Trust, and perfidiously renounces his most holy Faith, and

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that with manifest Opposition to the solemn Vow by which he was obliged to adhere to the Articles of Faith, and to keep the Commandments of God all the Days of his Life. And as thus the wicked Apostate plunges himself into the Guilt of the most criminal Impiety and Falseness, so he also disgraces himself by the most abject Timidity and Cowardice. Base Pusillanimity and Faint-heartedness is generally loathed and despised, and they in whom it domines are the Scorn and Derision of Men. How contemptible are they who dare not look an Enemy in the Face, and who continually turn their Back upon Danger? But ah! how egregiously disgraceful is Cowardice, when it prevails over Men in the Case of Religion; when they meanly shrink and flee at the Apprehension or Presence of Persecution; when they are ready ingloriously to part with their God, his Truths and their Duty, to say and unsay, to act and counteract, to swear and foreswear, as their Persecutors dictate and prescribe unto them?

IV. Fourthly, What in the most dangerous Seasons ought to prevail with the Christian to be stedfast and firm in professing the Truths, and obeying the Precepts of his Holy Religion; is, that this his Constancy and Perseverance would tend very much to the Glory of God, the Interest of Religion, and the Advantage both of the Friends and Enemies of

Truth

Truth and Righteousness. The glorious Power of Divine Grace shines with a most illustrious Brightness in the undaunted and unshaken Courage and Steadiness of those who are endued therewith. Their noble and radiant Virtue and Constancy reflect a peculiar Honour upon the Author, and clearly demonstrate that they who are under the Conduct and Influence of his Spirit, can, as St. Paul speaks, *do all Things*, and at once triumph over their own InfirmitieS, and the Threatnings and Power of their most malicious and formidable Enemies. Indeed the Christian glorifies God by his interiour Faith and Piety; but that reaches not beyond the private Scene of his own Mind: But by the overt Acts of Faith, exerted in the open Confession of the Truth and Practice of Righteousness, when the utmost Danger threatens him, his Light shines before Men, and he glorifies God in the View of the World. As by this Means the Honour of God is promoted, so likewise the Interest of Religion is furthered. For while Men take Notice of the intrepid Courage and Stedfastness of the Professors thereof, amidst all the Terrors or Allurements which surround them; then they are apt to think that these brave religious Heroes are supported by a Divine Power, and that they must have very convincing Reasons for the Truth of their Faith; since for it they boldy encounter the most

most dreaded Evils, and chearfully renounce the most admired Goods of this present World. This Reasoning is supported by the marvellous Progress of Christianity in the Period of the first most cruel Persecutions ; which happy and surprising Event was certainly very much owing to the courageous & unmoveable Constancy of its Professors. To conclude the present Argument for the Christian's firm Adherence to the Truths and Precepts of the Gospel, let us remember that thereby he charitably consults the Advantage both of the Friends and Enemies of Truth and Righteousness. By his exemplary and unshaken Steadiness, the Friends of Truth and Righteousness, are confirmed in the Love of the one and Practice of the other; and the inveterate Adversaries to both are sometimes happily reconciled unto them, and become zealous Profelytes and Patrons to those very Truths and Duties, which they formerly persecuted with the extremest Hatred and Fury. Whereas alas ! upon the other Hand, the shameful Cowardice of Professors, in forsaking the Doctrines and Duties of their holy Religion, for the Fear of Danger, gives the greatest Scandal to all Sorts of Persons; it extremely grieves the stronger Christians, it disheartens the weaker, & tempts the wavering to fall, and it wofully hardens Unbelievers, Heretics, Schismaticks & Evil-doers, in their Infidelity, Errours, Divisions and wicked Practices.

V. Fifthly and lastly, The Disciples of Jesus Christ are both exceedingly encouraged and obliged to a noble and bold Adherence to the Truth and their Duty in the Time of Persecution, by his glorious Example, and that of the Confessors and Martyrs under the old and new Testament. The unparallel'd Sufferings of the Holy and Innocent JESUS, for Truth and Righteousness sake, and his invincible Fastness and Constancy to both ; from his entring upon the Exercise of his divine Mission, until the Day that he witnessed a good Confession before Pontius Pilate, and sealed the same with his Blood upon the Cross; are well known to them who read the holy Evangelists. And they who consider the History of Joseph, Moses, David, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and of the Maccabees, and the Saints contemporary to them, will clearly see their sincere and steady Respect to Truth and Holiness ; how they choosed to expose themselves to the most frightful Dangers and Inconveniences, rather than to run counter to their Duty, throw away their Virtue, contradict their Consciences, forsake their Religion and embrace Idolatry. To this Catalogue of valiant Sufferers for Righteousness Sake, before the coming of Jesus Christ into the World, it is easy for us to add since his Appearance, a vast Number of most worthy and undaunted Witnesses to the Truth:

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They will presently be convinced of this, who look into the New Testament, and into Ecclesiastical History. These will be informed of the amazing Sufferings and Patience of St. John *Baptist*, St. Stephen, of the holy Apostles, the Primitive Christians, of all Characters, Sexes and Ages, and of those renown'd and holy Martyrs and Confessors, who have bravely endured the fiercest Persecution for their firm Adherence to the Christian Doctrine, as it stands in Opposition to antient or modern Heresies, to Popish Errors, to Schismatical or seditious Principles and Practices. And now will not every true Christian find his Heart fired with an holy Ardour of copying after so bright and great Patterns of Courage and Patience, in confessing the Truth and suffering for it, whensoever he shall be called thereunto? The faithful Disciples of Christ will be the more ready to imitate his glorious Example, and the noble Behaviour of his worthy Friends, in the Case which I have named, when they reflect that they are obliged to it by express Command. As to the first, St. Peter says, *For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example that we should follow his Steps.* 1 Pet. ii. 21. And as to the latter, St. Paul writing to the Hebrews, exhorts them thus, *Be not slothful ! but Followers of them, who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises.* vi. 12.

And

And now we see, that there is a Variety of the strongest Arguments and Motives, for persuading us constantly to adhere to the Doctrines and Precepts of Jesus Christ; and, when we are called thereunto, to confess the one and obey the other in the most discouraging Junctures, when Persecution threatens or attends the doing either of them. From what I have said, we learn, that in this Practice there is a happy Conjunction of the greatest Interest and Duty. That the Will of our Lord is signified to us in this Particular, as plainly as Words can do; and that our Obedience therein is encouraged by the Promise of the most glorious Happiness, & our Disobedience threatned with utmost Misery. That the greatest Joys of Heaven are secured to holy and valiant Confessors, and on the other Hand the sharpest Pains of Hell are reserved for wicked and impenitent Back-sliders: And that our being own'd or disown'd by Jesus Christ at the Day of Judgement, depends upon our owning or disowning him before the Faces & Tribunals of Men. As thus we find the Duty of which I have been discoursing, strongly recommended by the Motive of Interest; so when we consider what hath been said upon that Subject, I hope we will acknowledge, that we are most firmly bound to the Observance thereof by all the Ties and Rules of Religion, Virtue and Probity. By the sincere and holy Practice of

of it, we exert in a very eminent Manner, Piety, Justice, Fidelity, Fortitude, Zeal for God and Charity to Men. But by the wilful, deliberate, and impenitent neglecting and contradicting it, we plainly bewray a most wretched, base and irreligious Disposition, and discover to the World, how utterly void we are of solid Vertue and Piety. Who can fully describe that atrocious and detestable Impiety, Injustice, Treachery, Cowardice and Contempt of Religion ; which are undoubtedly included in the aforesaid Wickedness and Crime ?

Let us therefore firmly resolve, and honestly endeavour, through the Assistance of Almighty Grace, to continue stedfast & unmoveable in professing and practising the Doctrines and Precepts of Jesus Christ ; howsoever fatal this our courageous and unshaken Constancy may happen to be to our dearest worldly Interests. Let us remember how prodigiously foolish a Bargain they make, who barter their Souls for the World, who sell the Truth for Money, the Pearl of infinite Price for an earthly Treasure, and who exchange their present Integrity, and their future Hopes, for the trifling Vanities of this short and uncertain Life. What astonishing Madness or Unbelief is in the Practice of Apostates and Backsliders from Truth and Righteousness ? who, that they may shun Poverty, Imprisonment

Banishment, Torture, or Death here; do choose to expose themselves to the Want of all that is good hereafter, to the Horrors of the infernal Prison, to everlasting Banishment from Heaven, to the second Death, and to the Pains of Hell for ever. But O! the admirable Prudence of those, who for their Fidelity to their Blessed Lord, and for their Love to Truth and Righteousness; do chearfully forego all the Comforts and Advantages of this World, and endure its most terrible Evils and Calamities. For by this their voluntary incurring of these comparatively light and momentary Evils, they shall happily escape those which are infinite and eternal. And for the chosen Loss of vain and temporal Things, they shall be rewarded with the fully satisfying Fruition of endless and unconceivable Joys.

If upon such Thoughts and Reflections, as the preceeding Part of this Discourse affords, about the Duty of constant adhering to Truth and Righteousness, in the Confession of the one and Practice of the other; any should be prone to enquire of those Means by which they might be assisted to perform it; I shall, as to what Advice I can give in this Matter, refer them to those Discourses I have already published upon these Words of St. Peter, *But, and if ye suffer for Righteousness sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their Terror, neither be troubled.* And so I shall pass straight on

to the last Observation offered to us from the Words of the Text, viz. The Qualifications which must accompany and adorn the Christian in the Discharge of the Duties contained in that Injunction, *'Be ready always to give an Answer to every Man; that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you.'*

These Qualifications are,

I. Calmness and Patience of Spirit, whereby the Christian may avoid exasperating the Adversaries of the Truth, by Wrath and Passion, while he vindicates the same. *'Be ready always to give an Answer with Meekness.'*

II. A holy and religious Fear, lest by an indiscreet and unwarrantable Zeal, or any other sinful Misbehaviour, he should offend God, or give just Offence unto Men, and particularly to his lawful Governours. *'Be ready always to give an Answer with Fear.'*

III. A good Conscience founded upon a blameless and Christian Behaviour, by which he may be able to silence or refute the calumnious Reproaches and Slanders of Heathens or other Infidels. *'Having a good Conscience; that whereas they speak Evil of you, as of Evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ.'*

I. The Christian is required to give an Answer to those, who ask him a Reason of the Hope that is in him, with Meekness. I am not here to represent the many great and in-

dear Reasons, which recommend this most amiable and excellent Grace ; I shall only consider it briefly, with Respect to the Business in Hand, as it is a Qualification highly necessary to him, who gives an Answer concerning the Hope that is in him. Now this will appear, if we consider,

I. That as a meek and quiet Spirit, is at all Times a most precious and comely Ornament to the Christian ; so in a peculiar Manner, it suits and adorns him when he pleads the Cause of Jesus Christ : So that truly however in that Case he is called to the Exercise of a holy Zeal ; yet undoubtedly that Zeal must be temper'd and govern'd by Meekness. Does it not well become him to be meek, who acts as an Advocate for the meek and lowly JESUS, and apologizes for the Christian Religion, which so earnestly enjoyns Meekness, and forbids all sinful and irregular Anger ? How exceedingly indecent would it be in such an Apologist, to give Way to transporting Passion and ungoverned Wrath ?

II. As Meekness is a most proper and decent Accomplishment and Dress in him, who apologizes for the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, or for any of his Truths or Precepts ; so it adds a mighty Force and Efficacy to his Apology or Reasoning in its Behalf ; it powerfully insinuates it self into the Affection and good Esteem of the Opponent, while it charms him

by

by its lovely Innocence and Sweetness ; it disarms him of his furious Wrath, or prevents the rising of it, in those dark tempestuous Storms, which disturb and overcloud the Mind, and so render it deaf to Reason, and blind to the plainest Evidence of Truth. Whereas blustering Anger and Insolence in those who at any Time glory to be the Patrons of Truth or Righteousness, do occasion a considerable Hindrance to both. For they often hurry the *Apologist* into unguarded and unwarrantable Expressions, such as give Advantage to the Adversary, or provoke his Spirit, and irreconcile him more and more to the Truth. As what I have said is justified by Reason and Experience ; so it is plainly warranted by divine Authority. Thus St. Paul advising *Timothy* how to demean himself in the holy Ministry, especially in one of the great Offices thereof, viz. that of convincing Gainers, he uses these Words ; *The Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient : In Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging the Truth.* 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. And as St. Paul recommends Gentleness, Patience and Meekness to him, who is an Advocate for the Truth, and wisely designs to recover those who are in Error : So St. James informs us, that Wrath is a most improper Instrument

for promoting Religion and Piety, either in our selves or others. *Be slow to Wrath, for the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God.* Ja. i. 19, 20. To these Testimonies, I shall only add two from the Proverbs of Solomon, xv. 1. *A soft Answer turneth away Wrath, but grievous Words stir up Anger.* xxv. 15. *By long forbearing is a Prince persuaded, and a soft Tongue breaketh the Bone.*

Secondly, The Text gives us an Account of another Qualification, which ought to adorn him, who either apologizes or suffers for Truth or Righteousness: *viz.* A holy and religious Fear, lest by an indiscreet and unwarrantable Zeal, or any other sinful Misbehaviour, he should offend God, or give just Offence unto Men, and particularly to his lawful Governors. *Be ready always to give an Answer with Fear.*

In speaking to this Part of the Apostle's Advice to him, who owns and pleads the Cause of Jesus Christ, in the Time of Persecution: I shall in few Words consider,

I. First, That it is an Advice extremely proper and seasonable to him, who is so employed.

II. Secondly, That the Person so employed, is otherwise very much bound to follow the Advice.

I. The Advice given by St. Peter to him,
who

who in the Time of Persecution, owns or pleads the Cause of Jesus Christ, *viz.* That he should do it with a holy and religious Fear, is extremely seasonable and proper. For he who is so employed, if he be not continually upon his Guard, and assisted by Grace, is in Danger of falling into many Mistakes and Sins. He may, unless preserved by divine Aid, and his own Watchfulness, at length succumb under the continued Burden of the Cross, yield to the Force of incessant Pain or Threatnings, and so lamentably renounce those Truths and Duties, which formerly he courageously own'd and observ'd. Or if he retain his Integrity, a zealous Regard to God, and to what he reckons to be Truth and Duty; yet through Ignorance or humane Frailty, he may fail many Ways in managing the Cause of Religion: While he apologizes for the Truth, he may hurt it by the Weakness of his Reasoning, or the Violence of his Passion. If he do not wisely advert unto himself, he may scandalize the Enemies of Religion, by an ill instructed and conducted Zeal; shewing it self by injurious Expressions and Actions, particularly with respect to Magistrates and Rulers.

II. The Person employed in owning and pleading the Cause of Jesus Christ, in the Time of Persecution, is, in Pursuance of the Argument just now explain'd, very much bound to act that Part, with a holy and religious

Fear. This is evident, because it is his Duty with the utmost Care to avoid these Miscarriages ; to which, I have proven he is very liable in the mentioned Conjunction, if he take not heed unto his Ways. The true Christian who seriously considers the criminal Guilt of Defection from Truth and Righteousness, of sinful Evasions and Complyances, of turbulent and furious Zeal, and of Rebellion against Authority ; will find himself obliged with a holy Fear to stand off from all those Practices, when he acts either as an Apologist, or Confessor for the Doctrines of Jesus Christ.

Entirely agreeable to these Directions of St. Peter was the meek, harmless, and submissive Behaviour of the Apostles, the primitive Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons, with the whole Body of Christians, under all those dreadful Persecutions which they endured. Indeed these renown'd and valiant Champions of Jesus Christ contended earnestly for the Faith against heathen Emperors, Rulers, Judges, and Philosophers ; but it was not with carnal, but spiritual Weapons, not with railing Accusations in their Mouths, nor with Swords in their Hands, but it was with Prayers, Tears, Constancy, Patience, Humility, Self-denial, calm Reasoning, with untainted Loyalty and Passive Obedience to their most cruel persecuting Rulers, when they could not in Conscience yield the Active.

III. And *Lastly*, The Apostle requires of him who gives an Answer concerning the Hope that is in him, that he have a good Conscience founded upon a blameless and Christian Behaviour ; by which he may be able to silence or refute the calumnious Reproaches and Slanders of Heathens, or other Infidels. *Having a good Conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as of Evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ.*

These Words might open to us a large Field of Discourse, but I shall explain them with a precise Regard to the present Subject, or so far only as they contain an Endowment or Qualification extremely befitting him, who either by his Reasonings or Sufferings stands up in Defence of the Christian Religion, or of some particular Truths or Duties thereof. St. Peter then seems plainly to intend by them, that all Apologists or Confessors in so holy and excellent a Cause as that of the Christian Religion, should be holy and blameless, sincerely endeavouring to keep their Consciences void of Offence toward God and toward Men, and ordering their whole Behaviour with an universal Respect to the Commandments of God; that so their own Minds may bear witness to their Innocence and Piety, and the Enemies of Jesus Christ may be found Liars to their own Confusion and Shame, who charge his Doctrine

Doctrine with encouraging Irreligion, Sedition, Vice and Immorality, and his Disciples with practising them.

Now this Advice of St. Peter to the Christian Apologist or Confessor, viz. that both the one and the other should have a good Conscience supported and proven by a good Conversation in Christ ; or in other Words, that they should lead holy, righteous and inoffensive Lives before God and the World : I say this Advice to the Persons whom I have named, recommends itself to them by all those Arguments and Motives which ought to have the greatest Influence upon their Minds.

I. We learn from the inspir'd Adviser, that Obedience to his Counsel is the proper and effectual Method for convincing calumnious Slanderers of their Lies, and for rubbing off those infamous Reproaches which malicious or prejudicte Adversaries are wont to throw both upon Truth and Righteousness, and the constant Patrons and Followers of the same. *Having a good Conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as of Evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ.* As it was the invidious and hellish Practice of the first Enemies of Christianity, to load it with the Charge of impious Doctrines, and its Professors with the Guilt of the most atrocious and horrid Crimes ;

Crimes ; so Infidels, Hereticks, Schismaticks, and all the Enemies of Religion, Unity and Peace, have followed their Example throughout the succeeding Ages of the Church, in treating after the same injurious Manner the faithful, Orthodox and peaceable Disciples of Jesus Christ : But while these lead holy and blameless Lives, that will wipe off from them the Shame of Slander and forged Guilt, and make it fall upon those the spiteful and wicked Authors. And that which adds a mighty Force to this Argument, in the Opinion of the faithful and constant Friends of Jesus, is this Consideration, that their conspicuous and exemplary Piety and Virtue, may become happily instrumental, not only to convince the Enemies of Religion of their uncharitable Mistakes about them the Professors of it, but also to convert them to the Love and Profession thereof. This we are plainly taught by St. Peter in that Injunction to his dearly beloved and Christian Countrymen, 1 Pet. ii.

12. *Having your Conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as Evil-doers, they may by your good Works which they shall behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation.*

II. 'Tis highly agreeable to the Character of a Christian Apologist or Confessor, that they should have a good Conscience founded upon a good Conversation in Christ. Would not a vicious

a vicious and scandalous Deportment in any one Instance of Wickedness, be absurd and unaccountable in such, as did either plead or suffer for a Master, a Faith, a Rule of Life, so absolutely pure and holy? How extremely indecent is it for him, to be impious and wicked, who contends for the Doctrine that is according to Godliness? For him who is zealous in owning Gospel-Truths, to be careless in observing Gospel-Precepts? For him who warmly vindicates the Honour of Jesus as a Prophet, to affront and dishonour him as a King? Or, if he acknowledges his regal Authority in one Command, to disown and despise it in another; and if he suffers for one Duty, scandalously to live in the habitual Neglect of many? Ah! ah! as this heterogeneous and contradictory Behaviour foully stains the Reputation of those who are guilty of it, and gives too just Ground to suspect the Want of true and solid Goodness in them: So (what they may tremble at the Thought of,) In a Lay

III. It invalidates their Title to the Crown of Glory, which is promised to them who suffer for Righteousness sake. For their Title thereto (as I hope is clearly proven in my Discourse upon these Words of St. Peter, *If ye suffer for Righteousness sake, happy are ye*) is not founded barely upon their suffering in a good Cause, but upon the Merits of Jesus Christ, and their being also themselves truly virtuous and good.

Let

Let none wofully deceive themselves, by thinking that their owning the most fundamental Truths, or some one considerable Duty ; and their suffering for the one or other, will excuse their wilful, habitual and unrepented of Sins, or purchase for them the Enjoyment of that Felicity, which these Miscarriages forbid, and screen them from that Wrath which *is revealed from Heaven against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men, who hold the Truth in Unrighteousness.* Rom. i. 18.

IV. While the Christian by a sincere and uniform Obedience to the Commandments of God, continues in the Possession of a good Conscience, he will thereby find himself both strongly inclined and enabled to Constancy in the Time of Persecution. For in the having a good Conscience, there is included so quick a Sense of good and evil, of Duty and Sin, and an Affection so ardent to the one, and so strong an Aversion to the other, and likewise such Love to God and Zeal for his Glory, that they who have a good Conscience, and are govern'd by it, will doubtless be powerfully disposed and assisted to adhere to Truth and Righteousnes ; tho the Consequences of that Adherence should be utterly pernicious to their temporal Concerns; whereas on the contrary, it is much to be fear'd, that they who have an evil Conscience, by indulging themselves in any sinful and vicious Course, will not stand their

Ground

Ground against the Shock of Persecution, but will shamefully play the Fugitive and Apostate, and choose rather to renounce their holy Religion, or the clearest and most important Truths and Duties thereof, than to suffer for the same. Alas! what other can be expected of them, who are void of the only solid Principles of Stedfastness and Constancy? viz. A lively Faith, the true Fear and Love of God; and who on the other Hand, are full of the Love of this World, and dread nothing so much as the Evils thereof; and who by the habitual Practice of known Sin, do continually baffle and contradict their Consciences, and so render them callous and insensible. St. Paul confirms what I have asserted, concerning the Effects both of a good and evil Conscience, with Relation to Constancy to the Truth; while agreeably to it, he thus exhorts his beloved Timothy, i. i. 19. *Holding Faith, and a good Conscience, which some having put away, concerning Faith have made Shipwreck.* Here in the Judgment of this great Apostle, we see it is necessary, that they who would retain Purity of Faith, and persevere in the Profession of it, should live holily, or keep good Consciences; and that such who shake Hands with these, and throw away their Virtue, are ready to cast their Faith over Board, especially in a Storm.

Lastly, The having a good Conscience, is highly necessary to those who desire to be faithful

faithful and valiant Confessors, when they are called forth to own the Doctrines and Precepts of Jesus Christ, and to suffer for them. For a good Conscience obtain'd and cultivated (as it must needs be) by sincere and universal Holiness, doth both embolden the Christian to suffer, and keeps him constant and cheerful under his Sufferings. As Fortitude and Patience go into the Character of a good Man, so he glories to exert those Graces in the Cause of God and Religion. And as the holy Ghost delights, to support and comfort the Righteous in all their Tribulations, so more especially in those which they endure for Righteousness sake. This the persecuted Friends of God, have found true to their own most comfortable Experience, and to the Amazement and Confusion of their Persecutors. O! how powerful was that Assistance from above! and how strong those divine Consolations, which made the Martyrs of Jesus Christ, to exult and triumph in the midst of the most cruciating Torments. But farther, a good Conscience contributes exceedingly to inspire those who have it with undaunted Courage and Magnanimity, both in encountering and enduring the most dreadful Persecution for God and Religion's sake, because it assures them of his Love and Favour here, and of infinite and eternal Felicity hereafter, through the Merits of Jesus Christ. The vigorous and well grounded Hope, which those conscientious and holy Confessors entertain of that incomparable and inestimable Glory and Happiness, which shall be revealed in them in the World to come; animates them to look the most hideous Dangers in the Face, with an undisturbed and fearless Tranquillity and Valour, to bear the sharpest Sufferings, not only with Patience but Joy, and cheerfully to part with this World, and all its admired Glories and Pleasures. In Proof of this, both divine and humane History relate in numerous Instances, the stupendous and glorious Triumphs of strong and well grounded Hope, over the most cruel Fury of enraged and malicious Persecutors.

When we review what hath been said of this last Qualification and Ornament, which St. Peter recommends to Christian Apologists and Confessors; viz. that they should *Have a Good Conscience, or, lead holy and blameless Lives*: We see that it is enforced with those Reasons, which will undoubtedly prevail with them, who have a just Regard to the Glory of God, the Honour of Religion, the Welfare of their Neighbour, and to their own Credit and Salvation. O

happy

happy are they ! who amidst all the impending or incumbent Evils of Persecution, are conscious to themselves of their Uprightness and Piety, and who in the last Extremities of it, can with a humble Sincerity and Confidence use the Words of St. Paul, when he foresaw his approaching Martyrdom. 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8. *I am now ready to be offered, and the Time of my Departure is at Hand: I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me on that Day's and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his Appearance.*

I have now, blessed be GOD, explain'd in some Measure the very material and instructive Words of St. Peter, which are pointed at on the Title-Page of those Discourses, which I first published upon the weighty and useful Subject of Persecution: And I have endeavoured from them to shew, as is promised there, *The Safety of the Righteous Man from Injury and Harm: or, if he is persecuted for Righteousness sake, his Felicity in that Condition.* As also I have at large, insisted on the profitable Directions which that Apostle gives, for regulating the Behaviour of the Christian in the dangerous Conjuncture of Persecution. And now I heartily wish, that the Reader, particularly he, who either actually suffers for Righteousness sake, or in the Wisdom of divine Providence shall suffer upon so glorious an Account, may by the Blessing of God, reap the Benefit and Comfort designed for him by these Discourses. To God's Benediction, I humbly commit both him and them, and I cannot, I think, either conclude them, or take Leave of him more advantageously, than with that apposite Prayer, which the Church useth, when she commemorates the Death of the glorious Proto-Martyr.

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Grant O Lord, that in all our Sufferings here upon Earth, for the Testimony of thy Truth, we may stedfastly look up to Heaven, and by Faith behold the Glory that shall be revealed; and being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our Persecutors, by the Example of thy first Martyr Saint Stephen, who prayed for his Murderers to thee, O Blessed Jesus, who standest at the Right Hand of God, to succour all those that suffer for thee, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.